THE HON'BLE SRI JUSTICE N.V. RAMANA

Writ Petition No.24651 of 2006

Dated: 27.11.2006

Between:

M.M.Iqbal.

.... PETITIONER

AND

The APSRTC, rep. by its Regional Manager, APSRTC, Medak Region, Medak District and others.

.....RESPONDENTS

THE HON'BLE SRI JUSTICE N.V. RAMANA

Writ Petition No.24651 of 2006

ORDER

This writ petition is filed seeking a Mandamus declaring the action of 2nd respondent in issuing the proceedings dated 15.04.1996, imposing punishment of deferment of annual increment for a period of one year with cumulative effect, as illegal and arbitrary.

2. The petitioner is employed as a Driver in APSRTC. While so, on 08.02.1996, a charge sheet was issued to the petitioner alleging that he unauthorizedly absented from duties for a period of two days, and that he was required to submit the explanation, as to why necessary disciplinary action shall not be taken against him, for which he submitted explanation denying the charges framed against him. Respondent, without conducting any regular departmental enquiry and without affording any opportunity, passed the impugned order imposing punishment of deferment of annual increment for a period of one year with cumulative effect. The appeal preferred by the petitioner was also rejected. Hence, the present writ petition is filed.

3. Learned counsel for the petitioner contends that punishment

of deferment of increments for a period of one year with cumulative effect is a major penalty, and the same cannot be imposed without conducting regular departmental enquiry as contemplated under the APSRTC Employees' (CC&A) Regulations (for short 'the Regulations'). In support of his contention, learned counsel relied on the judgment of the Supreme Court in "***Kulwanth Singh Gill v. State of Punjab***[1]". Learned counsel for petitioner also relied on a judgment of this court in W.P.No.8079 of 2006 dated 21.04.2006, which is in a similar background of facts and circumstances.

4. On the other hand, learned Standing Counsel appearing on behalf of the respondent-Corporation vehemently opposed the said contention and submitted that respondent, after careful consideration of the entire evidence available on record together with the explanation submitted by the petitioner, has passed the impugned order, hence, no reasons to interfere with the same.

5. Heard the learned counsel for both the parties and perused the material available on record.

6. It is an admitted fact that 2nd respondent imposed punishment of deferment of annual increment for a period of one year with cumulative effect, which is a major punishment. Admittedly, no regular departmental enquiry was conducted though the charge sheet was issued to the petitioner before imposing the penalty. The apex Court in "***Kulwanth Singh Gill's Case*** (1 supra) held that stoppage of increments with cumulative effect is a major penalty and it cannot be imposed without conducting the

departmental enquiry. Since the punishment of stoppage of annual increment for a period of one year was imposed without conducting regular departmental enquiry violating the judgment of the Apex Court, the impugned order cannot be sustained.

7. In the ordinary course of things, the impugned order needs to be set aside leaving it open to respondents to pass fresh orders, but to avoid further litigation in the matter, I deem it appropriate to dispose of the writ petition with the following direction.

The impugned order dated 15.04.1996, passed by 2nd respondent, imposing the punishment of stoppage of annual increment with cumulative effect, is modified to that of stoppage of one increment without cumulative effect. The petitioner shall not be entitled to any monetary benefits arising out of this order, but shall be entitled to fixation of pay only.

Accordingly, the writ petition is disposed of. No costs.

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N.V. RAMANA, J.

Date: 27.11.2006

sj/nsr

[1] 1991 Supp (1) SCC 504